

INHOFE'S AFGHANISTAN LESSONS LEARNED

The Risk to American Security is Growing Because of President Biden's Failed Leadership

As U.S. Sen. Jim Inhofe (R-Okla.), ranking member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, continues his exhaustive review of the situation in Afghanistan, here are three takeaways from the October 26 hearing with Undersecretary of Defense for Policy Colin Kahl and Joint Staff Director for Operations Lt. Gen. James Mingus:

1. THE REPORTED NUMBER OF AMERICANS BIDEN LEFT BEHIND IS GROWING.

First, President Biden promised he wouldn't leave Americans behind as Secretary of State Tony Blinken told Congress that there were *10-15,000 American citizens* in Afghanistan during a mid-August phone call with Senators.

Then, after the U.S. withdrew, the administration said it had withdrawn [6,000 American citizens](#), and consistently said that there were only *100-200 left* – when, according to the previous math, there were somewhere between *4,000-9,000 Americans left behind*.

Last week, the administration announced it had withdrawn *234 Americans*, and congressional committees were reportedly briefed that there were still *363 Americans left in Afghanistan, 176 of whom wanted to leave*.

Most recently, on October 26, [Kahl provided an entirely different \(and larger\) set of numbers](#) – but even those numbers concede that the administration airlifted fewer Americans out of Afghanistan than it previously claimed, and that there were still many more left in country than it had previously acknowledged.

The fact that Americans were left behind is a disgrace. The fact that we still don't know how many are looking to escape Taliban rule is absolutely maddening.

2. THE THREAT FROM TERRORIST ORGANIZATIONS IS GROWING.

President Biden claimed many times that the U.S. was leaving Afghanistan because we defeated al-Qaeda and diminished the terror threat — even going so far as to say al-Qaeda was “gone” from Afghanistan [on August 20](#). But **we know that's not true — and the threat seems to be growing rapidly.**

On September 28, CENTCOM Commander General McKenzie told us that ISIS-K is “newly rejuvenated” and is “gathering strength,” and that “we know the same for al-Qaeda.” General Milley told us that ISIS-K and al-Qaeda could be prepared to attack the U.S. homeland *within 12-36 months* from now.

On October 26, Kahl moved up that target, saying al-Qaeda could have the capability to strike us within “*a year or two*” and the threat from ISIS-K is even closer, “*6-12 months*.”

Lt. Gen Mingus reiterated that President Biden's “over-the-horizon” counterterrorism strategy will make countering these threats “more difficult,” and Kahl confirmed that the U.S. has yet to secure basing in the region, which our military officials say is necessary to conduct these types of operations.

3. THE SCOPE OF THE ADMINISTRATION'S MISTAKES AND MISTRUTHS IS GROWING.

“We've never known as much about Afghanistan as we thought we did,” Kahl said on October 26. That's crystal clear now. President Biden didn't understand what would happen after unconditionally withdrawing all U.S. troops from Afghanistan — nor did he listen to his military leaders with experience on the ground, who saw the collapse of the Afghan government coming.

As Kahl said on October 26, “*The president did not believe that 2,500 troops was a stable equilibrium.*” President Biden apparently knew better than his military advisors who said repeatedly that leaving 2,500 U.S. troops in Afghanistan, combined with 5,000-8,000 NATO forces, would provide stability in Afghanistan.

Instead of acknowledging that this force could have provided stability in Afghanistan, the Biden administration has repeatedly blamed the Afghan Security Forces' “lack of will” for why they collapsed so quickly. Indeed, Lt. Gen. Mingus came to the October 26 hearing with written testimony that yet again used this Administration talking point — but when pressed in person, he conceded that *their breakdown began after U.S. troops began leaving the country*.

BOTTOM LINE: The Biden administration does not understand — and isn't being honest about — the mess they left behind in Afghanistan or what it's going to take to protect American families from the renewed terrorist threat.